

The Prevention First Act requires that private health plans to cover FDA-approved prescription contraceptives and related medical services.

Madam Speaker, it is critical in any discussion of reproductive rights to devote time to teenagers, who face the consequences of so many of these issues more acutely than other age groups. Teens face additional barriers regarding access to services and information. Sixty percent of teens have sex before graduating high school. Those who receive comprehensive sexuality education that includes discussion of contraception as well as abstinence are more likely than those who receive abstinence-only messages to delay sex, to have fewer partners, and to use contraceptives when they do become sexually active. Efforts by conservatives to restrict access to family planning services and promote abstinence-only education programs—which are prohibited from discussing the benefits of contraception—actually jeopardize adolescent health and run counter to the views of many mainstream medical groups.

Nearly 50 percent of new cases of STDs occur among people ages 15 to 24, even though this age bracket makes up just a quarter of the sexually active population. Clearly, teens have the most to lose when faced with an unintended pregnancy or an STD infection.

Moreover, 1 in 3 girls becomes pregnant before the age of 20, and 80 percent of these pregnancies are unintended. Teen mothers are less likely to complete high school. Children of teenage mothers have lower birth weights, are more likely to perform poorly in school, and are at greater risk of abuse and neglect. Improving access to contraceptive services and information does not cause non-sexually active teens to start having sex. Instead, teens need information to help them both postpone sexual activity and to protect themselves if they do become sexually active. A November 2006 study of declining pregnancy rates among teens concluded that the reduction in teen pregnancy between 1995 and 2002 is primarily the result of increased use of contraceptives.

The Prevention First Act provides funding to public and private entities to establish or expand their teenage pregnancy prevention programs. This bill also provides for comprehensive, medically accurate sex education programs that teach young people about abstinence, health, and contraceptives. Moreover, this bill requires federally funded programs that provide information on the use of contraceptives to ensure that the information is medically accurate and includes health benefits and failure rates.

Madam Speaker, virtually everyone can agree that reducing unintended pregnancies, lowering STD infection rates, and promoting the health of all women and their children, regardless of their economic or social situation, are important public health goals. It should come as no surprise that the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention included family planning in their published list of the "Ten Great Public Health Achievements in the 20th Century." My bill, the Prevention First Act, will improve access to family planning services for women in need throughout America, and will go a long way toward fulfilling the promise of this important public health achievement.

Madam Speaker, I urge every Member to stand with the women of our country and to support this important bill.

INTRODUCTION OF H.R. 800, THE EMPLOYEE FREE CHOICE ACT

HON. GEORGE MILLER

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, February 5, 2007

Mr. GEORGE MILLER of California. Madam Speaker, today, I am pleased to be joining 230 of my colleagues in introducing H.R. 800, the Employee Free Choice Act. The Employee Free Choice Act is a bipartisan bill designed to provide workers with a fair opportunity to bargain with employers for better wages, benefits and working conditions.

In recent years, despite a growing economy, the middle class has been squeezed. Corporate profits and executive compensation have skyrocketed, but the middle class has seen their wages stagnate, while the costs for basic needs like healthcare, education, food, energy and housing continue to increase. Globalization and misguided government policies have contributed to a growing income disparity and less economic security for middle class families.

One way to help the middle class is to provide them with a fair opportunity to organize and join unions, so they can have a say in what goes on in the workplace. Workers who belong to unions earn 30 percent more than nonunion workers. In addition, they are 62 percent more likely to have employer-provided health coverage and four times more likely to have pensions.

The current process for forming unions is badly broken and so skewed in favor of those who oppose unions, that workers must literally risk their jobs in order form a union. Although it is illegal, one quarter of employers facing an organizing drive have been found to fire at least one worker who supports a union. In fact, employees who are active union supporters have a one-in-five chance of being fired for legal union activities. Sadly, many employers resort to spying, threats, intimidation, harassment and other illegal activity in their campaigns to oppose unions. The penalty for illegal activity, including firing workers for engaging in protected activity, is so weak that it does little to deter law breakers.

Even when employers don't break the law, the process itself stacks the deck against union supporters. The employer has all the power; they control the information workers can receive, can force workers to attend anti-union meetings during work hours, can force workers to meet with supervisors who deliver anti-union messages, and can even imply that the business will close if the union wins. Union supporters' access to employees, on the other hand, is heavily restricted.

The Employee Free Choice Act would add some fairness to the system by: (1) allowing a majority of employees the opportunity to select to be represented by a union by expressing their decision through the signing of authorization cards; (2) provide for mediation and arbitration when workers and employers cannot agree on a first contract; and (3) increase penalties against employers who threaten, intimidate or fire workers for engaging in protected activity.

I urge all my colleagues to join in this effort to provide working people with a real opportunity to bargain for better wages and benefits.

TO REQUIRE THAT ALL SHIPS WITH BALLAST WATER TANKS, INCLUDING VESSELS THAT ARE NOT CARRYING BALLAST WATER, TO CARRY OUT THE EXCHANGE OF BALLAST WATER OR ALTERNATIVE BALLAST WATER MANAGEMENT METHODS PRIOR TO ENTRY INTO ANY PORT WITHIN THE GREAT LAKES

HON. MARK STEVEN KIRK

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, February 5, 2007

Mr. KIRK. Madam Speaker, today I introduced a bill to require all vessels, including those with no ballast water on board, NOBOBs, to undergo ballast water exchange before entering the Great Lakes.

Invasive species pose a dangerous threat to the Great Lakes. These creatures can cause irreparable ecological and economic damage to a variety of locations and industries. In 2005, economic losses were estimated at an annual \$5 billion to the region. More than 160 non-native species have already invaded the Great Lakes ecosystem. As the largest source of our Nation's fresh water, the Great Lakes must be protected from further introduction of invasives.

One method by which these species enter the Great Lakes is through ballast water tanks. Current law requires ships carrying ballast water to undergo ballast water exchange to flush out invasive species before entering the Great Lakes from another port. However, 90 percent of all ships entering the Great Lakes have no ballast water on board. These NOBOBs are not subject to the same ballast water exchange laws, even though they still have ballast tanks. Invasive species often survive in the sediment at the bottom of these tanks. When these ships operate in the Great Lakes, they may add and then pump out new ballast water before leaving. This mixes with residual ballast water and sediments, and provides an unregulated pathway for the introduction of new invasive species when the ballast water is released.

In other words, the contamination begins.

We must not leave 90 percent of ships entering the Great Lakes untreated. This bipartisan legislation requires all ships with ballast tanks, including NOBOBs, to undergo ballast water exchange. In addition, the bill commissions a study of the effectiveness and environmental soundness of other ballast treatment options. The language fixes a current problem and works towards an even stronger solution for the future.

Madam Speaker, this legislation, while small, has enormous consequences for the health and safety of one of our national treasures. I am proud to introduce this ballast water legislation to significantly reduce the infiltration of invasive species into the Great Lakes.

STAFF SERGEANT RICHWELL
ARZADON DORIA—A TRUE HERO

HON. BOB FILNER

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, February 5, 2007

Mr. FILNER. Madam Speaker, United States Army Staff Sergeant Richwell Arzadon Doria